

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 TRSE-00 ABF-01 EB-08 MCT-01 DLOS-09 OES-06
COME-00 FS-01 SY-05 DHA-02 SIL-01 LAB-04 AID-05
FRB-03 XMB-02 OMB-01 STR-04 /109 W
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P R 222025Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1156
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USSOUTHCOM
AMCONSUL CALI
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, ECON, PLOS, CO
SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. PARTISAN DEBATE BETWEEN SUPPORTERS OF PRESIDENT LOPEZ AND HIS CONSERVATIVE PARTY CRITICS CONTINUED AT A HIGH LEVEL THIS WEEK AND THE PRESIDENT EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE VERBAL VIOLENCE MIGHT DEGENERATE INTO PHYSICAL VIOLENCE. THE CONGRESS CONCLUDED ITS SPECIAL SESSION, PASSING SEVERAL ADMINISTRATION SUPPORTED BILLS, INCLUDING THE IMPORTANT ELECTION REFORM BILL. VIOLENCE BY BOTH STUDENTS AND URBAN TERRORISTS CONTINUED IN BOGOTA, AND SECURITY FORCES OCCUPIED THE BOGOTA NATIONAL UNIVERSITY CAMPUS. A NEW EXCHANGE SYSTEM WAS ADOPTED WHICH WILL RESULT IN A SLIGHT REVALUATION OF THE PESO IN RELATION TO THE DOLLAR. LOS SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVES HELD A SUCCESSFUL MEETING WITH COLOMBIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS.

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2. POLITICAL DEBATES CONTINUE. THE SOUND AND FURY OF THE DEBATES IN CONGRESS OVER THE ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING PRESIDENT LOPEZ' SONS, AND THE COUNTER-CHARGES AGAINST HIS CRITICS, CONTINUED UNABATED AS CONGRESS RUSHED TO COMPLETE ITS SPECIAL SESSION. EVIDENCE OF THE FURTHER HARDENING OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AND GOVERNMENT AND ITS OPPONENTS WAS THE RESIGNATION

OF SEVERAL OSPINA-PASTRANA SUPPORTERS FROM VARIOUS OFFICIAL POSITIONS, IN LINE WITH THEIR GROUP'S OPPOSITION ROLE. THESE RESIGNATIONS WERE APPARENTLY IN REPLY TO THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH OF APRIL 16 IN WHICH HE CRITICIZED THOSE IN THE GOVERNMENT WHO FAIL TO SUPPORT IT, AND HIS STATEMENT THAT THEY AND NOT HE WILL BE THE ONES TO RESIGN. LOPEZ LATER EXPRESSED HIS GROWING CONCERN THAT THE VERBAL VIOLENCE WHICH NOW PREVAILS IN COLOMBIA MIGHT DEGENERATE INTO THE TYPE OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE WHICH MARKED THE EARLY 1950'S. THE END OF THE SPECIAL SESSION OF CONGRESS (SEE FOLLOWING ITEM) SHOULD HELP TO TEMPORARILY COOL THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE. A RENEWAL OF THESE BATTLES CAN BE EXPECTED WHEN CONGRESS MEETS IN REGULAR SESSION IN JULY.

3. CONGRESS ENDS SPECIAL SESSION. THE SPECIAL SESSION OF CONGRESS, WHICH BEGAN MARCH 1 FOR A THREE WEEK PERIOD AND WAS THEN EXTENDED, ENDED APRIL 22 ON A SUCCESSFUL NOTE WHEN THE SENATE GAVE LAST-MINUTE APPROVAL TO THE ELECTION REFORM BILL. (SEPTCL)
BECAUSE OF THE PROTRACTED PARTISAN CONTROVERSY, IT WAS UNCERTAIN UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE WHETHER EITHER HOUSE WOULD FIND TIME TO ACT ON THIS ITEM TO WHICH PRESIDENT LOPEZ HAD ASSIGNED HIGH PRIORITY. ALTOGETHER, SEVEN OF THE EIGHT BILLS PRESENTED BY THE PRESIDENT WERE PASSED BY THE CONGRESS.

4. PUBLIC ORDER. ROVING BANDS OF YOUTHS COMMEMORATED THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATHS OF TWO STUDENT DEMONSTRATORS BY ATTACKING AND BURNING VEHICLES IN VARIOUS PARTS OF BOGOTA ON 18 APRIL. THE SEIZURE BY SECURITY FORCES OF A LARGE CACHE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF MOLOTOV COCKTAILS HIDDEN ON THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY CAMPUS PRESUMABLY PREVENTED MORE SERIOUS PROBLEMS AND THE ONLY BOMBING DURING THE WEEK, AT THE CIVIL DEFENSE HEADQUARTERS BUILDING IN BOGOTA, CAUSED MINOR DAMAGE AND NO PERSONAL INJURIES. IN AN ATTEMPT TO PREVENT FURTHER DISTURBANCES, POLICE UNITS HAVE BEEN POSTED ON AN INDEFINITE BASIS ON THE BOGOTA NATIONAL UNIVERSITY CAMPUS AND POLICE PATROLS INCREASED IN THE CITY. IN OTHER INCIDENTS IN BOGOTA, THE POLICE GUARD AT THE PARAGUAYAN EMBASSY WAS SHOT TO DEATH BY UNKNOWN ASSAILANTS AND THE URBAN TERRORIST CELL OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY (ELN) CRITICALLY WOUNDED AN IMPORTANT TEXTILE EXECUTIVE WHOSE COMPANY HAS RECENTLY HAD LABOR PROBLEMS. AN ELN CLANDESTINE COMMUNIQUE TOOK CREDIT FOR THE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION AND WARNED OF FUTURE ACTIONS AGAINST OTHER BUSINESS EXECUTIVES.

5. NEW EXCHANGE REGIME ESTABLISHED IN COLOMBIA.
A NEW EXCHANGE SYSTEM WAS ADOPTED EFFECTIVE APRIL 20 (BOGOTA 3608) WHICH WILL RESULT IN A SLIGHT REVALUATION OF

THE PESO IN RELATION TO DOLLARS EARNED FROM COFFEE, SERVICES, OR OBTAINED THROUGH DEBT. THE NEW REGIME WILL RESULT IN A MULTIPLE EXCHANGE RATE, ONE RATE FOR MINOR EXPORTS AND ANOTHER RATE FOR ALL OTHER DOLLAR SOURCES AND FOR IMPORTS. THE REVALUATION AND THE SPREAD BETWEEN THE TWO EXCHANGE RATES WILL BE ABOUT THREE PERCENT ONCE A SECONDARY MARKET DEVELOPS FOR EXCHANGE CERTIFICATES. THE MEASURE WAS MADE NECESSARY BY THE FLOOD OF COFFEE AND SERVICE EARNINGS AND THE HIGH, ABOUT THIRTY PERCENT, INFLATION RATE.

6. LOS TEAM CONCLUDES SUCCESSFUL CONSULTATIONS. DEPUTY SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE LAW OF THE SEA, JOHN SMITH AND RICHARD DARMAN, TOGETHER WITH THE EMBASSY'S LOS OFFICERS, DISCUSSED LOS ISSUES ON APRIL 19 WITH HIGH RANKING FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS. PARTICIPANTS ON BOTH SIDES CONSIDERED THE MEETING TO BE BENEFICIAL AND FRIENDLY. FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS TERMED THE MEETING "VERY USEFUL." THE FOREIGN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MINISTRY WAS PLEASED BY THE INCLUSION OF BOGOTA IN THE EIMISSARIES' ITINERARY.
DREXLER

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Message Attributes

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